

# Project Spotlight: Cheltenham Aquatics Assessment



**Project Type:** Program Evaluation

**Timeline:** July - September 2024

## Project Context

In Summer 2024, Anavi Strategies was hired by the incoming Director of the Cheltenham Township Parks and Recreation Department's to evaluate the current state of its aquatics programming, and to make recommendations for how the township could expand its impact over the next few years. Specifically, the Department wanted to explore how to strengthen its administrative processes, as well as identify which kinds of investments would be needed to institute year-round aquatics offerings—a significant expansion beyond its current slate of programs.

## Our Process

To develop this assessment, Anavi Strategies held a series of semi-structured interviews with the aquatics program's swim coaches and parent volunteers. Recognizing the sensitivity of discussing administrative challenges and potential changes, we used trauma-informed tools to create an environment of trust and psychological safety. Trauma-informed practices help establish a "container" where participants feel respected and secure. This can make it easier to discuss complex issues openly. By focusing on empathy, active listening, and nonjudgmental engagement, we encouraged each stakeholder to share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations for year-round aquatics programming in Cheltenham Township. After completing all interviews, we synthesized our findings into key themes, takeaways, and specific recommendations for consideration by the Department.



**CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP**  
*Pennsylvania*



**Glenside Pool,  
Cheltenham**

*Photo Credit: Kevin Derr*

## Recommendations

Anavi Strategies presented a final report to the Parks and Recreation Department Director that included current strengths, areas of growth, and recommendations generated from these stakeholder interviews. The recommendations included the following:

- Hiring process improvements and support for additional aquatics positions, including those that can support year-round programming.
- Strengthening the Department's financial management practices to institutionalize efforts currently managed by parent volunteers.
- Development of agreements with local institutions to use facilities for year-round programming.
- Increasing marketing and recruitment efforts to build community awareness of new winter aquatics programming, and ensure there is enough demand for the additional program slots.

## Project Outcome

The Parks and Recreation Director was able to leverage Anavi Strategies' findings and recommendations to promote the importance of additional aquatics programming to the township's Board of Commissioners. Just one month after the conclusion of the project, the Director was able to secure four days a week of winter aquatics programming at the Cheltenham High School pool, a significant win for the future of year-round aquatics in Cheltenham.